

**A STUDY OF THE DEVELOPMENT AND POTENTIAL FOR
BALLET COSTUME DESIGN BEGINNING IN THE TWENTIETH
CENTURY**

A Senior Scholars Thesis

by

CATHERINE MINOR

Submitted to the Office of Undergraduate Research
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the designation as

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOLAR

April 2011

Major: Environmental Design

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ABSTRACT

A Study of the Development and Potential for Ballet Costume Design Beginning in the Twentieth Century. (April 2011)

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Beginning with the twentieth century, ballet costume design experienced a major shift. The tutu and rigid formwork of classical ballet made way for vanguard experimentation. From world of art to symbolism then futurism, cubism, and modernism among others, progressive shifts in aesthetic ideals followed the major artistic movements of the day. World Wars and Russian revolutions made impacts on the subject matter and extremity of these experiments. After the chaos caused by the wars, there was some natural reversion to the classical style as people yearned for order and the peace they had once had. This reversion was finalized in Russia by a mandate from Stalin in 1932. The rest of Europe suffered a cut in productions because of the wars and witnessed New York rise as the new cultural and artistic center of the world as many artists fled Paris to avoid the violence and find work.

The focus of this research is on why the tutu has remained the preeminent costume of ballerinas for so long and whether or not this adherence to classicism is a justified design

choice. To begin the research, the history of ballet costumes, predominately in Russia and Russian ballet companies, is analyzed and compressed into a generalized timeline that shows when major art movements and world events took hold and how they influenced ballet costumes. From this research, it is seen why design decisions were made and if those choices were made for reasons still applicable today, such as the dancer's ability to move, or if the original reason has long since become a mute issue.

Based on the results of this research, a new costume was designed for the swan queen in *Swan Lake*. This character is chosen because she is timeless and always appears similarly clad. The new design takes into account the reasoning behind the tutu and pushes the tutu forward into a new dimension.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Ballet as an art form has been around for centuries; however, it was not until the early eighteenth century, when Maria Carmego began shortening her skirts to show off her intricate footwork, that the idea of wearing something other than everyday clothing to dance in really began. With my research I intend to look at the ballet costumes of the early twentieth century and analyze their design. I expect to find that the design of ballet costumes for classical ballet, aside from a few minor shifts due to new technologies, has become more a matter of redoing what has always been done, than actually creating something unique and innovative.

Through my research, I will develop a timeline of the major shifts that occurred within the design of costumes for classical ballets in the twentieth century and use this to analyze the pros and cons of the current standard for classical ballet costumes. From this information I will develop a list of proposed changes to costume design, and use this list to redesign the costumes for a classical ballet to be determined. I hope this process will help, not only me, to forming my own unique and progressive style for costume design, but also the field of costume design as a whole. I believe this research has the potential

This thesis follows the style of *The Design Studies Journal*.

to change the rationale behind the designs and encourage costume designers to design based on criteria other than tradition.

Literature review

This literature review covers Russian ballet and the Ballets Russes. Both are important to the discussion of ballet and ballet costume design primarily because of their roles as pivots in the turn that ballet took during the first part of the twentieth century. The turn of the century saw great experimentation with artistic expression, as artists tried to correlate the new feelings and emotions that the industrial revolution had brought upon them into something physical. Many of these leading vanguard artists took to ballet set and costume designs as outlets for their experimentation and creativity.

Ballet costumes prior to the 1905 Russian revolution

Russia has long been known for its excellence in ballet. Even as late as 1903, the Russian Imperial Theatre was creating such timeless works as *Sleeping Beauty*. Before 1905 however, the tradition of ballet seldom received any push towards change. Costumes for dance were only slight variations of everyday clothing. The changes to costume, such as the shortening of the female dancer's skirt, initially to better reveal footwork and later to allow for more freedom of movement for the legs, reflected changes in society's standards of modesty but these changes to design were not fueled by any artistic impulse. The shortening of the skirt eventually created the tutu, which freed the feet and legs for better dancing, but it did not do anything to free the torso

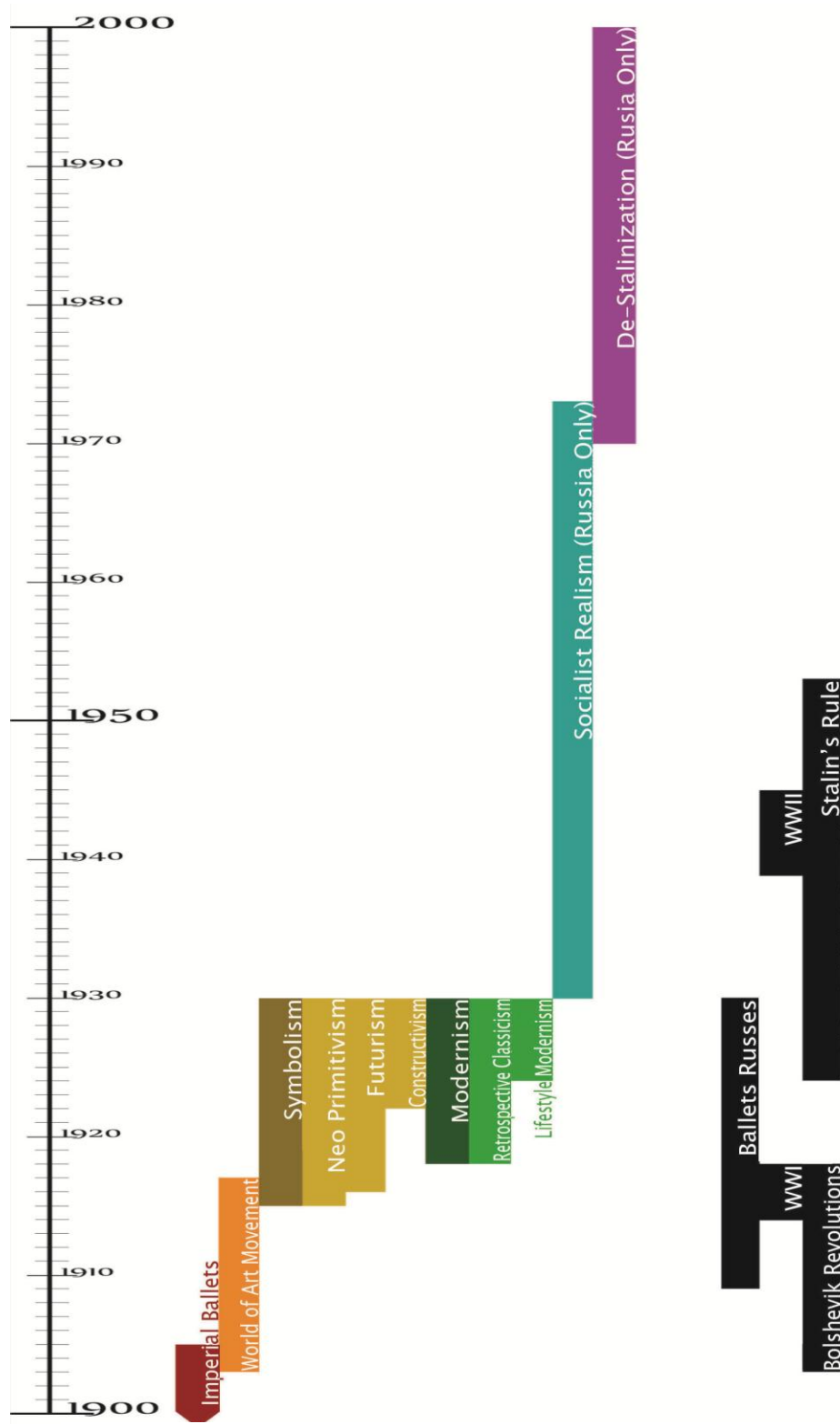


Figure 1. Timeline. The figure organizes the periods in the history of Russian ballet in relation to periods in Russia's revolutionary history.

which was still encased in the corset, worn by most women in this period. The tutu and corset created a very typical silhouette for ballerinas; this, along with the pointe shoe, became the unofficial uniform of classical ballet. Even when realism did manage to find its way into classical productions, it always took a back seat to the form and style of classicism. A ballet might be set in ancient Greece, but the actual styles of that period would be modified to fit onto the classical ballerina silhouette. Because the Tsars controlled the theatre, the Tsar's opinions propagated and little western influence reached the Russian stage during the imperial age. A group self-titled the Nevsky Pickwickians, began the movement which finally shifted Russian art towards the Western European paradigms. Founding members of this movement included Aleksandr Benois, Sergei Diaghilev, and León Bakst; all key members in the future ballet company, The Ballets Russes (French for 'The Russian Ballets'). This movement later came to be better known as Mirissskustva, world of art. Figure 1 shows the progression of ballet costumes after 1905.

World of art

World of art was characterized by a constant search for new artistic means. The movement encouraged free experimentation and the integration of western ideas into the Slavic tradition. As soon as one way of doing something became mainstream or widely understood, the artist would abandon it in constant search of something completely new. Searching for new experiences can be closely linked to the industrial revolution, which brought about a plethora of never before experienced events, such as driving. This

movement was colored by the turn of the century zeitgeist in Russia; the urge to discover the future through a study of the past and the belief that the world is on the verge of significant change. The most prominent designers of this movement were Konstantin Korovin, Aleksandr Golovin, and León Bakst.

A large extent of the world of art's influence on turn of the century art and culture in Russia is due, at least in part, to the political revolution in Russia which began in 1905, a few years after they initially began their work. This revolution permeated all aspects of Russian life, including the theatres. Many dancers, choreographers, musicians, and the like began to strike on the Imperial Ballet Theatres, believing them to be corrupt and politicized, rather than true to the artistic expression of the ballet. Those striking against the Imperial Theatres were fueled by revolutionary impulses and the desire to create a new ballet that was not associated with the old ways they were striking against. This desire to create something completely new aligned closely with the goals of the world of art.

Traditional ballet had become associated with careerism and being controlled by a higher power. This meant that many of the dissenters began seeking work outside the traditional realm, although some still retained their imperial positions at the same time. One such dissenter was Michael Fokine who created over two dozen ballets during the years 1906-1909; he did this often on his own budget for events he organized himself outside of his job as a choreographer at the Maryinsky Theatre. Because these ballets

were on his own time and budget, Fokine was completely free to experiment. With his work he wanted to create a unity of expression, rather than the traditional hybrid form in which realistic motifs were laid atop classical forms. He decided to eliminate the classical element in his designs for the most part and chose instead to make ballets that were as realistic and historically accurate as possible. For these ballets Fokine closely studied the period he wanted to represent, believing that different cultures and different time periods not only had distinct verbal and visual languages, but also their own unique language of expression as well.

Although realism was not the only style explored by Fokine during these years, it is the most important because it opened classical ballet to an era of great experimentation. *Petrouchka* (1911) is one ballet that well presents Fokine's years of experimentation with realism; in this ballet Fokine tried to mask the hand of the choreographer so that the ballet seemed to spring forth naturally from real life. Aside from exoticism and eroticism, world of art artists tended to be very interested in ballets, such as *Petrouchka*, that involved very authentic Russian themes. Alexandre Benois, who was in charge of the designs, carefully studied fashion of Russia in the 1830-1840s to create over one hundred costumes relating to various social classes of the time, in order to create a realistic crowd for the market. Aside from the costumes there were innumerable tiny details designed to make the scene as authentic as possible. Fokine's experiments removed the necessity of the pointe shoe and tutu; instead, allowing the designer to

clothe the dancer in costumes that closely resembled the everyday wear of the ballet's setting.

One designer who, in collaboration with Fokine and other choreographers and artists, was responsible for many of the advancements was León Bakst, a founder of world of art. Bakst's costumes made great leaps forward in freeing the dancer's body and opening it to a wider range of movement which revolutionized the way in which the ballet was danced. "Unlike the tutu, which either straightened the body or bobbed around its circumference, a Bakst costume flowed with the movement, rounding, loosening, and enlarging it," exalting the very idea of movement (Garafola, 1998). While the classical ballerina had been noted for her straight posture and rigid form work, dancers of Fokine's ballets were able to move more expressively and in a more rounded manner; the elimination of the corset had freed the entire middle section of the body and allowed the dancer to curve her body in new, fantastic ways. Further freeing the body, Bakst often exposed the flesh of the female dancers by having them dance without tights and sometimes even went so far in his elimination of classical forms as to eliminate not just the pointe slippers but shoes altogether. Although many of his sketches portray exposed breasts for the women, Bakst always modestly covered them on stage. The change in costume and movement may have played a large part in the fascination with exoticism and eroticism that arose during this period when they were first able to be expressed with any authenticity. Examples of these works include *Cleopatra* done in 1909 and *Scheherazade* done in 1910.

A hallmark of Bakst costumes were his harem pants. Made of light, flowing material, they represented a complete denouncement of classical ballet styles and allowed the dancer to move almost completely unbound. The dancer's ability to move so freely helped to heighten the impression of nudity one gets when looking at a Bakst costume. Harem pants also fit nicely into designs for the popular theme, of exoticism. Dressing women in pants was in opposition with traditional gender roles, and Bakst's costumes for men were just as heterodoxical. His costumes toyed with the traditional ideals of masculinity and were often very revealing or feminine.

Symbolism

Although symbolism was late to reach the Russian vocabulary of art, when it finally came it brought with it a broad new assortment of ideas such as synesthesia, cubism, abstraction, and mechanization. Most of these ideas dealt with finding new ways to represent the form. Falling under the heading of symbolism are three main movements; futurism, neo-primitivism, and constructivism.

Futurism

As the industrial revolution boomed around the world, artists began searching for ways in which to represent this new world; a completely new set of experiences called for a completely new artistic vocabulary. Futurism was pronounced to be anti-naturalist by Marinetti's Futurist Manifesto in 1909. Those ascribing to futurist principles were disgusted by the contemporary theatre's reliance on realism since there seemed to exist

within them an inability to do anything other than historical reconstructions or photographic reproductions of daily life. Although realism had been a major break from the classical past only a few years earlier, futurists now believed it to be outdated. The short lived lifespan of realism can be traced back to world of art's impulse to constantly create something new. No futurist ballet was officially commissioned by the Ballets Russes until 1914, but futurist experimentation had long permeated throughout the company. The ballet that best summarizes futurist experimentations is *Parade*, done in 1917 by Jean Cocteau, with costume designs by Pablo Picasso. After WWI, the Ballets Russes became heavily saturated with futurist explorations; saying goodbye to realism and psychologically motivated characters and welcoming the new age of dynamism, angularity, mechanization, and inhumanity. The new naturalism involved humans becoming part of the machine of industry.

Vanguard artists were obligated to begin purging the modern world and even popular entertainments, such as the jazz hall and cinema, for raw material to use in their productions if they were to stay aloft in the tides of change. Futurists came to see these popular entertainments as the only true and pure forms of expression. WWI (1914-1918) assisted the futurist manifestation by causing most of the high theatres in Paris and other European cities to close, as budgets were cut and young dancers sent off to war. The result was a renewed form in alternative entertainments such as variety theatre and music halls.

Cinema was one alternative entertainment that had a profound effect on the futurists. Because French production had been drastically cut in wake of the war efforts, most of the films seen during this time were American. Jean Cocteau, who produced the famous futurist ballet *Parade*, was strongly influenced by American cinema. Not only he did attempt to incorporate the stereotypical American characters, such as the American girl, into his narrative, he also adapted cinematic techniques such as freeze frame and slow motion into his choreography.

Futurism changed the movement of the dance by mechanizing expressions and expanding on the idea started by Fokine, of the dancers as a living, cohesive unit, rather than the strictly hierarchical and individualized arrangement of classical ballet. This mechanization, brought on by the industrial revolution, strove to eliminate the human element. Performers were reduced to the same level in the composition as the scenery and distorted as far as possible. Make-up, wigs, masks, headlight eyes, megaphone mouths, funnel ears, and mechanized costumes were among the many tools utilized in eliminating any idiosyncratic or realistic detail. Oftentimes the ballets were even purged of narrative and presented simply as a mechanical process such as the working of a clock or a locomotive. This eliminated the human form and presented the dancers as a mass, void of individualism; ballet manifests the feeling during this era that the human was being swallowed up by the machine of progress and the conflicting feelings society had towards this change.

Encapsulating all the years of futurist experimentation was the ballet *Parade*, done by Jean Cocteau in 1917. This ballet marked the artistic shift away from world of art aesthetics and opened up the modern era of ballet to vanguard experimentation. Seen in this ballet are the effects that cubism, the cinema, variety theatres, jazz, and industrial progress had on ballet. The ballet has no real plot and is simply an enactment of a propaganda parade for a traveling circus. Costumes, done by Pablo Picasso, were sophisticated cubist constructions that abstracted and masked the dancers into never before seen, but somehow recognizable, forms. One flaw was that Picasso had never designed for a ballet before and failed to consider the ability of the dancer to actually dance in his costumes, limiting the repertoire of movements available for the choreographer to choose from. This ballet was the first piece of art to receive the description of being surreal, and is thus credited as the beginning of the surrealist movement. Another major landmark that came with this ballet was the opening of the question, “how far can classical ballet be distorted before it is no longer ballet?”

Neo-primitivism

While world of art designers had been focused on the exact replication of historical scenes, neo-primitive artists brought the legends and folklore into a modern aesthetic, creating a new time period that was neither here nor there. The major distinguishing factor between futurism and neo-primitivism lies in their respective choices of subject matter; apart from this, their aesthetics were strikingly similar. Some of the key artists of the neo-primitive movement that worked with the Ballets Russes were Mikhail Larinov

and Natalya Goncharova. They believed mimesis not to be the primary goal of design; ballet décor “does not have as its sole purpose the establishment ... of the time and place of action ... Décor is above all an independent creation, supporting the spirit of the work to be performed” (Garafola, 1998). In their designs, they compressed three dimensional spaces onto a flat surface, partially abstracted all of their characters and sets with geometric forms, and juxtaposed vivid, bold colors. Ballets that epitomized neo-primitive art include *Le Coq d’Or*(1914), and *Soleil de Nuit*(1915).

Constructivism

Stripping ballet of everything but its most basic and necessary parts was the constructivist movement. The constructivist ballets explored geometric form with purely utilitarian intentions; rejecting the idea of art for art’s sake, they designed with the intention of making society better. A few artists, like Elizaveta Lakunina and Moishe Levin, tried to meld constructivist ideas into works that had been written before the movement began, such as *Death of Pazuukhin*, but were generally met with little success. An Exception to this rule is *Les Noches* (1923), written by Bronislava Nijinska. Tatiana Bruni was one artist who seized the opportunity to create a new work entirely in the constructivist feel and created the ballet *Bolt* in 1931, but its lifespan was cut short by the “Decree on the Reconstruction of Literature and Artistic Organizations” in 1932.

Les Noches was originally imagined before the constructivist movement; it did not reach the stage however, until it was organized on constructivist terms. Eliminating anything

not functional, Natalia Goncharova's design for the stage was done completely in a monotonous blue grey color; only the white outline of a window afforded any contrast. Costumes were done in brown, but only after much debate between Nijinska, who wanted them the same color as the set, and Goncharova, who won because he was backed by Diaghilev in his choice of brown. All of the dancers were dressed uniformly in simplified peasant dress; brown dresses with white pinafores for the women and brown pants with white shirts for the men. There was no difference between the prima and the corps. The characters exerted no individual character or control over their destiny, seeming to act almost insentiently. A subtle teasing of gender roles, as was popular in the 1920s, is seen in the fact that the male and female dancers use the same movements; the male to speak of power and the female of pain.

Tatiana Bruni's work, *Bolt*, in 1931, was an apogee of constructivist experiments in Russia. The characters, Soviet factory workers, were exaggerated, abstracted, and repeated to eliminate humanity and individuality. They moved with dynamism and a singularity of purpose. This work was removed from theatres because there had begun a backlash in Russia against artworks that were not easy to understand and did not propagate Soviet goals. This backlash was caused by Joseph Stalin who, in attempt to control the population and suppress rebellion made the "Decree on the Reconstruction of Literature and Artistic Organizations" in 1932. The artistic movement that grew out of this was called socialist realism.

Modernism

As World War I drew to an end, and spurred by futurist experimentation, ballet began to create more and more modernist works; in fact “ballet became synonymous with the very idea of modernity” (Garafola, 1998). The very first modern ballets, as early as *Fuane* in 1912, were done under the tutelage of futurism. During the 1920s, when modernism reached its peak, two stylistic attitudes predominated; lifestyle modernism and retrospective classicism. These attitudes reflected the changing appearances and conflicting identities that characterized the decade colored by a war and the prosperity that followed.

Retrospective classicism

During and after the chaos that ensued through WWI, there arose a longing for the pre-war order and familiarity. “As touchstones of European life collapsed... something akin to classicism joined the constellation of influences reshaping Diaghilev’s aesthetic” (Garafola, 1998). This new style, called retrospective classicism, represented a retreat from the front lines of vanguard experimentation; returning instead to figurative styles and nationalist ideals. Critics viewed it as a betrayal of Diaghilev’s modernism principles, although it was only an addition to the aesthetic repertoire; not a replacement for anything. As the war dragged on, home front audiences necessitated a distraction from reality to elevate their moods. A cultural xenophobia, arising from the hostilities, meant that the new classic pieces were generally not performed internationally. For example, in France, there was a renewed surge of interest in French architecture,

gardens, and monarchist history, accompanied by a rejection of all things German. The Ballets Russes was a novelty in this style because they were a Russian ballet that never performed in Russia; their position as an internationally renowned ballet gave them some immunity to the xenophobia and allowed them to continue performing in Paris. A remaking of the Russian Imperial Theatre's classical production, *Sleeping Beauty* (1903), renamed *The Sleeping Princess* (1921), was the first acknowledgement of retrospective classicism by the Ballets Russes.

Restrospective classicism did not strive to recreate classical works; it instead modified these works to appease the modern pallet. Unlike neo-primitivism though, retrospective works stayed true to the time and place of setting in their decor. The optimistic, rather than the moral, themes of retrospective classicism played a large factor in the stylistic differentiation of the new, retrospective pieces from the traditional classic works. The past was idealized, given a happy ending, and set to lively music. Audiences were given a safe world, where good always triumphed over evil, into which they could retreat. Although the contributing artists were leaders of the vanguard, their work for these productions were strikingly atypical compared to their other works and would not have given any sign that they were leaders of the cubist revolution. For the most part these ballets followed the traditional conventions of stage craft and period costume with only slight embellishments betraying their vanguard creators.

Les Tentations de la Bergère (1924), with costumes by Juan Gris and Georges Braque, is a prime example of a ballet in which period costume blended with abstract, vanguard elements. Gris and Braque preferred modernist restraint to accurate retrospection and therefore simplified cuts, edged borders, and allowed geometric motifs to appear in the decoration while remaining true to the period. Contemporary, couture fashions, more often than not, showed its face the designs of the historical costumes.

Retrospective classicism reverted to the past in more than design. An unfortunate byproduct of the movement was how it converted back to the pre-collaboration days of ballet. Choreographers, designers, and composers began once more to work in isolated spheres. The designs for the ballet, Les Facheux (1924), are a prime example of this. Done by Braque, the costumes overlooked the dancer and were consequently hard to dance in. According to the ballerina Lydia Sokolova, “they were...very difficult to dance in. They were unbecoming and with heavy flat hats tilted over the eyes, and heavy wigs, they gave an impression of weight” (Garafola, 1998). Good ideas never fully realized themselves in this absence of exchange. One example being the idea of Braque’s for the dancers to ‘disappear’ from the stage by turning their backs, costumed in the plain brown of the set, on the audience. Nijinska, possibly unaware of this idea, failed to incorporate it into the choreography.

Lifestyle modernism

Midway through the 1920s, ballet was hit with a rash of new, contemporary works that focused on the modern lifestyle. In contrast to retrospective classicism’s desire to retreat

into prewar safety, lifestyle modernism celebrated the prosperity and excitement of the 1920s. Contemporary lifestyles were brought to the stage through glamourized reenactments, set to upbeat jazz tunes. The characters had no care for anything past the present day and walked “through life with a great burst of laughter” (Garafola, 1998). Costumes had a give and take, mutually beneficial relationship with couture fashion, as they both influenced the other in turn. Cinema once again made its impact on the characterization and choreography of ballets. Modern fashions and music were used, not because they necessarily contributed to the ballets, but because they gave the ballets and aura of chic modernity that audiences found appealing.

Les Bitches, imagined by Jean Cocteau in 1924, “takes place among the mannequins and athletes of Cocteau’s raffishly fashionable world,” (Garafola, 1998). The setting and plot are frivolous, chic, and slightly off color. Women were garbed in the flapper dresses of popular fashion, accessorized with headbands and ropes of imitation pearls to give them an authentic air. Men wore tight fitting trunks, meant to resemble swimwear. These characters, the flapper and the athlete, are new identities that came about because of the leisure time and disposable income that industrial progress brought to the working class during this era.

High fashion found its way into the ballet aesthetic through ballets such as *Le Train Bleu*. Created in 1924 by Jean Cocteau, the ballet was named after the train that took the wealthy and famous to the French Riviera for their vacations. It was set on a beach with sun-worshipping tarts and gigolos whose costumes were designed by the couture fashion

designer Coco Chanel and looked as if they could have come straight out of her customer's wardrobes. They wore hand-knitted swimsuits and rubber slippers, as were commonly worn by women at the beach. The tight fitting bathing caps that topped the look soon made their appearance on fashionable beaches; an example of how costumes could affect fashions.

Socialist realism in Russia

Under the reign of Joseph Stalin, socialist realism took hold in Russia. The only reason for this shift was a "Decree on the Reconstruction of Literature and Artistic Organizations" by Joseph Stalin in 1932, making any other form of art illegal. This style necessitated a shift from experimental to classical formalism and produced ballets with more conservative, traditional, ethnographic, and optimistic plots. Stalin's opinions were propagated as the opinion of the masses and only works that furthered Soviet goals were allowed to be produced.

Many designers who had prospered pre-Stalin were able to adapt their styles to fit the new regime. Tatiana Bruni's designs for Bolt in 1931 differ drastically from her post mandate works such as The Bells of Konevll in 1938, and the Imaginary Bridegroom in 1946. Nikolai Akimov was able to adapt ballets that had been produced earlier in the century, such as Terentii and Hamlet, to fit the realistic requirements of the style. Other works, like the Dragon in 1940, were deemed inappropriate and banned from theaters because "the implications of the satirical parable about tyranny were deemed

ambiguous;” in other words, the dragon in the ballet too closely resembled Hitler and Stalin (Brandesky, Spring 2002).

After Stalin’s death there was a destalinization of Russia but the socialist realism style remained. During this time the ballets were dominated by themes and designs that glorified and reinforced Soviet ideals and their victory over the Nazis. Two locales were typical of this period, proletarian demonstrations and the factory. The two ballets that best present these locales are *The Spark*, done in 1949 by Victor Ivonov and *The Lutonin Family*, done in 1951 by Aleksandr Bosulaev. The curious thing about *The Spark* is how Ivonov managed to represent something as revolutionary as proletarian demonstrations in such a classical manner. The chaos of the event has been reorganized and fit into complete order and decorum.

De-Stalinization of Russia

The last three decades of the twentieth century in Russia are characterized by a search to rediscover an artistic identity not controlled by a dictator. There is a renewed collaboration between designers and directors and a further extension of this collaboration to design students. Most of the pieces produced during this time are highly theatrical and costume designers share in the theatrical approach. Many ballets have resemblances to or draw inspiration from Diaghlev’s productions in the first part of the century; showing a continuation of theatrical intent. *The Three Sisters*, designed by Kochergin in 1975, has a mass of revelers that are reminiscent of the mummers in the

original *Petrushka*. The *Liar*, designed by Cherednikova in 1982, is reminiscent in period style of works by Benois. With the end of the Soviet era in 1991, there has been further restoration of Russia's artistic past and reappearance of 1920s trends to the ballet stage.

Conclusion

After a zenith of great experimentation and discovery, the Russian ballet reverted to the classical days of the tutu, in part as a reaction to the chaos of WWI and later because of a mandate by Stalin. Now the art world in Russia is in the process of reawakening to experimentation and individual thinking and will hopefully return, one day, to the marvel that it once was. The ballets created by the Ballets Russes are still being performed around the world, albeit with some revisions and classical integrations. Studying this spectacular history and comparing the phases of change will help me to personally experiment and develop a style of costume design that is innovative and expressive of the new modern world.

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Having developed a general timeline of early twentieth century ballet costume design, the next step in discovering a new visual for costume design is to select one ballet to be researched more thoroughly. The costumes for this will be analyzed based on their design and functionality and a new generation of costumes for this ballet will be designed based on these findings.

Selecting the ballet

The ballet will be selected based on several criteria. These criteria will include but not be limited to the ballet being timeless, produced many times over, and not culturally restricted. Around ten instances of this ballet having been produced will be procured and processed, being studied for changes in overall design and style as well as significant changes to minor details.

If it is possible to find images and videos of it, then the original production will definitely be one of the productions researched. The other productions will be selected so that they cover and generalize a broad range of time succinctly. One of the productions will be a current example. If the selected ballet is being produced somewhere nearby, and is accessible to be studied in person, that production will be

used. Ideally the productions will be done by differing ballet companies because companies tend to closely reproduce or even reuse their own costumes from year to year.

Analyzing the costumes

Costumes will be analyzed visually through images and video found in online resources provided through the university. The costumes used for the prima ballerina will be selected to receive special observation so that they can be redesigned, and possibly built. The costumes will receive cross analysis, and be marked by differences such as skirt length, fabric, colors, flexibility, and period of production. The images of the costumes with dancers in similar poses may be made into transparencies and overlaid to visualize differences in their silhouettes.

Any newspaper reviews or dancer's accounts of productions that can be found will be relied on when determining how functional costumes were in the past. For more current productions there is the possibility of being able to directly ask the dancer. Even if a dancer has not danced in a particular role or ballet, they could be interviewed on their experiences with costumes.

Designing the costumes

After studying past productions and interviewing dancers to get an overall view of how the costumes for the selected ballet typically look and what could be changed, new designs and renderings of these designs will be produced by me. These new designs

should be suitable to the plot and mood of the ballet, while managing to bring new light to an old story. Possible changes include changing the time period or culture that the ballet is set in or stylizing the old time period. The ballet selected will not be constrained to historically accurate costumes.

The designs should also be functional, and not hinder the movement of the dancer. This will be achieved by thoroughly studying what hindrances dancers typically encounter and what the logic behind the original costumes was. It also has to be figured out which parts of the body are used the most in each roll. For instance if the dancer used their arms more than anything, baggy sleeves might get tangled and thick fabric or padding might make the arms impossible to move. The dancer in this instance therefore might prefer something lighter that flows well for the sleeves while the pants could be more substantial.

The colors in the costumes will an important consideration because they will help set the mood for the story. Most times ballets have no dialogue and rely heavily on the dancers miming, the set, and lighting to tell the story. This means that the story behind the ballet will factor heavily into the designs and is the one thing I am not at liberty to change.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

The ballet chosen was *Swan Lake* because it is not only timeless, but has seen very little change in design since its original conception in 1877. In all ten productions of the ballet were selected for various reasons which can be seen in Table 1. While the ballet has been produced the world over, the productions used for this research come only from Russia, England, and America because that is where most of the major productions have begun. One production used was not actually *Swan Lake*, but another ballet called *Dying Swan* which strongly influenced the costume designs for future productions of *Swan Lake* and was designed by the same designer who later designed the costumes for the Ballet Russe's production of *Swan Lake* in 1911 of which no pictures could be found.

Silhouette

The silhouette of the dancer is the first and probably the most important consideration for a costume designer. It is important because from the back of an auditorium the silhouette is the most visible aspect of a costume. The very first row of the audience is around forty feet from the front of the stage, behind the orchestra pit, and even they are unlikely to be able to fully appreciate small details on a costume. As illustrated in Figure 2, what up close is feathers over tulle and very beautiful, can look like one solid piece of white to an audience. Intricate details and floral patterns become simple textures at a

Table 1. Ballets chosen. The chart lists the productions of *Swan Lake* chosen for research and details about them.

Company	Year	Contributors		Significance	Obstacles
Bolshoi Theater, Moscow	1877	Choreographer:	Julius Reisinger	First production of <i>Swan Lake</i>	-Was not a success -Before photography was widely used -Very few surviving artifacts
		Designers:	Karl Valz, Ivan Shanguine, and Karl Gropius		
		Music:	P.I. Tchaikovsky		
		Odette/Odile:	Pelegaya Karpakova		
		Siegfried:	Stanislav Gillert		
Maryinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg	1895	Choreographer:	Marius Petipa (Acts I & III) and Lev Ivanov (Acts II & IV)	Standard version of <i>Swan Lake</i>	-Very few photos or other surviving artifacts -All of the photos are posed
		Designers:	Mikhail Bocharov and Heinrich Levogt		
		Music:	P.I. Tchaikovsky		
		Odette/Odile:	Pierina Legnani		
		Siegfried:	Pavel Gerdt		
<i>Dying Swan</i>		Choreographer:	Mikhail Fokine	Influenced later swan lake interpretations; choreographed by the vanguard choreographer who later choreographed <i>Swan Lake</i> for the Ballets Russes; designed by Leon Bakst of Ballet Russes	-Not actually swan lake, just similar -photos of the extant garment but not many of Pavlova actually wearing it
Maryinsky Theatre, St. Petersburg	1905	Designers:	Leon Bakst		
		Music:	Camille Saint-Saëns		
		Dying Swan:	Anna Pavlova		
Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, London	1911	Choreographer:	Mikhail Fokine after Petipa/Ivanov	First production of <i>Swan Lake</i> in the west	-Diaghilev was known for not allowing his productions to be photographed or filmed -A classical ballet done by a vanguard company; not the focus of historical research on Ballet Russe
		Designers:	Konstanti Korovin and Aleksandr Golovin		
		Music:	P.I. Tchaikovsky		
		Odette/Odile:	Mathilde Kshessinskya		
		Siegfried:	Vaslav Nijinsky		

Table 1. Continued.

Company	Year	Contributors	Significance	Obstacles
Kirov Ballet, Leningrad	1933	Choreographer: Agrippina Vaganova	Choreographer known for a new system of ballet that blended several styles. The old romantic style merged with more disciplined athletic movements.	-Russian name spelling translation to English -Action photos difficult to find
		Designers: Unfound		
		Music: P.I. Tchaikovsky		
		Odette/Odile: Galina Galina Ulanova/Olga Jordan		
		Siegfried: Konstantin Sergeyev		
San Francisco Ballet, San Francisco	1940	Choreographer: Willam Christensen	First full length production of <i>Swan Lake</i> in the United States	-Action photos difficult to find
		Designers: Leslie Hurry		
		Music: P.I. Tchaikovsky		
		Odette/Odile: Jacqueline Martin/Janet Reed		
		Siegfried: Lew Chrsitensen		
Stars of the Russian Ballet, documentary	1953	Choreographer: Gerbert Rappaport (director)	-Soviet recording of <i>Swan Lake</i> -Only extant recoding of prima ballerina assoluta Ulanova as Odette	-Film quality
		Designers: Unfound		
		Music: P.I. Tchaikovsky		
		Odette/Odile: Galina Ulanova/Natalia Dudinskaya		
		Siegfried: Konstantin Sergeyev		
Back Row Productions, London	1995	Choreographer: Matthew Bourne	Modern interpretation of <i>Swan Lake</i> , shows how the story is still alive	-Storyline is edited -Male costumes do not compare equally with female costumes
		Designers: Lez Brotherston		
		Music: P.I. Tchaikovsky		
		Odette/Odile: Adam Cooper		
		Siegfried: Scott Ambler		
San Francisco Ballet, San Francisco	2009	Choreographer: Helgi Tomasson	Recent production of <i>Swan Lake</i> that stays mostly true to historical versions	
		Designers: Jonathan Fensom		
		Music: P.I. Tchaikovsky		
		Odette/Odile: Maria Kochetkova		
		Siegfried: Davit Karapetyan		
Fox Searchlight	2011	Choreographer: Benjamin Millepied	A modern interpretation of a classic tale that reworks the story into a movie plot but also keeps the stage aspect of the original	-The focus is not on the stage so the ballet costumes get less screen time
		Designers: Kate and Laura Mulleavy		
		Music: P.I. Tchaikovsky		
		Odette/Odile: Natalie Portman		
		Siegfried: Benjamin Millepied		

distance. This is why most of the stage costumes that are supposed to be historically accurate and naturalistic are actually slightly simplified versions of what would have really been worn. If costume designer picks the correct silhouette for what era or style



Figure 2. Costumes from a distance. This figure shows how from a distance, details on costumes are not as visible



Figure 3. Swan queen silhouettes. This figure shows the silhouettes of all the swan queens studied.

they want to depict, the audience will be more able to recognize the setting for the action and understand the plot.

All of the swan costumes found were white and followed a basic ballerina silhouette. The ballerina silhouette has become a romanticized icon and is almost always seen in ballets originating from the imperial or national theatres and before the 1900s. This silhouette originally had a longer, more flowing skirt and the shorter, more layered design came about as ballerinas needed increased mobility for their legs in order to perform the increasingly more athletic kicks, turns, and leaps required of them. The longer skirt is still seen in ballets today, but is usually reserved for the dancers in the



Figure 4. Ballerinas in general. This figure shows how the silhouette of the ballerina has become stereotypical.

corps who perform less dramatic movements. Figure 3 shows the silhouette of the swan queen from each of the productions. While the use of the classical ballerina silhouette can be argued for because of its iconic standing and connection to romanticized heroine of days gone by, it can also be argued against because it has become so generic and over used. Figure 4 shows how the silhouette of a random swan queen compares to that of ballerinas from other ballets. Figure 5 shows how the silhouettes of the swan queens closely relate to one another, rarely moving outside of a contained space, despite the athletic movements performed.



Figure 5. Swan queen comparison.
This figure shows how the swan queens relate to one another.

While the swan queen's silhouettes line up with one another and with other maidens from other ballets, one thing they have never seemed to resemble is a swan. Most of the perception that the ballerina is supposed to be a swan comes from the title of the ballet, the color of the costume, and the dancer's swanlike movements. While the swan is an off centered creature, with a curving neck turning into a smooth rounded chest and finishing in a feathered rear, the ballerina is completely symmetrical. If a ballerina was put into silhouette and spun in circles, the only way to tell that she was moving would be the

movement of her leg. Figure 6 shows how the ballerina and the swan queen can relate to one another through the dancer's movements.

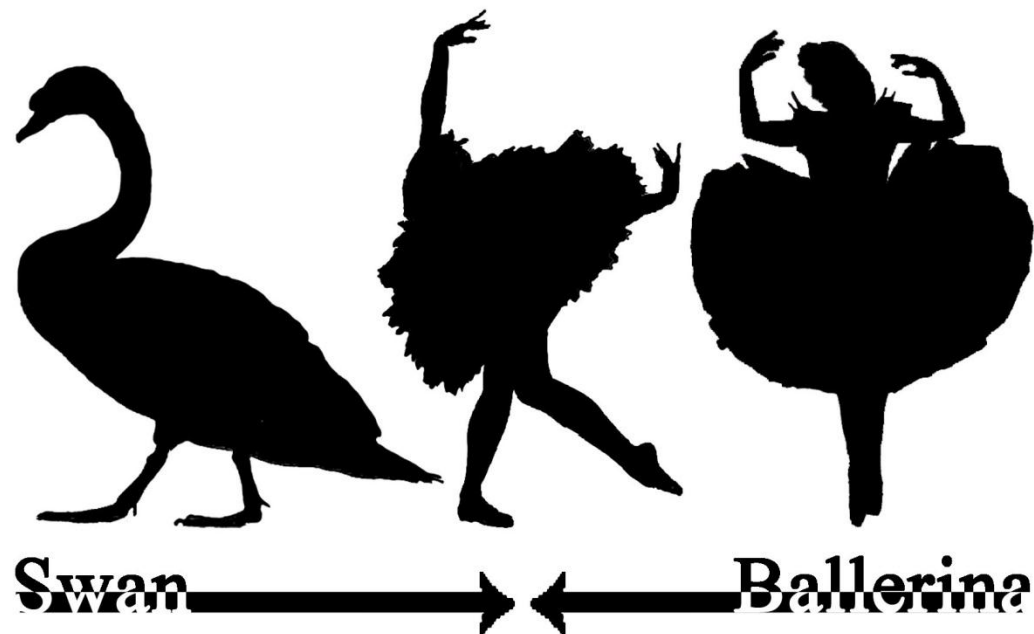


Figure 6. Ballerina swan.
This figure shows how the
ballerina becomes more
swanlike through her poses.

Color

For romanticized ballet costumes, whose silhouettes are somewhat restricted in their ability to specifically date or locate the ballets action, the way color is used plays a key role in character development. Colors invoke emotional responses and have cultural associations. For example shades of green and red on costumes might indicate that the ballet is taking place around Christmas time while pastel colors could invoke a feeling of springtime. Red could also be used to costume a character that is consistently angry

whereas blue typically gives the sense that a character is of a calm temperament. Red and black worn together is often associated with Spain but red and blue worn together bring about a patriotic response for Americans.

Swan Lake is a ballet of black and white, good and evil. The swan queen, Odette, is always dressed in white because not only are swans white, but white represents light, goodness, innocence, purity, and virginity and is thought to be the color of perfection. Audiences will easily recognize her as good and sympathize with her plight. Odile, the daughter of the evil sorcerer, and some say Odette's evil twin sister, is always seen in black. Black is seen as a mysterious and evil color, related to the dark and evil things unknown. Odile is instantly recognized as an imposter by the audience because, while she is usually danced by the same dancer as Odette and wears a very similar costume, her color is not only a direct opposite from Odette's white but it is a color associated with evil.

Texture

Texture is usually one of the last considerations for a costume designer when their costumes are going to be put on a stage far from the audience. However, while the actual texture can be difficult to see from a distance, its effect is important to how the audience perceives the costume. Many designers of the swan queen's costumes recognized this and sometimes tried to incorporate a texture that somewhat resembled feathers into their designs. The designer Mikael Fokine, actually went so far as to use real feathers on their

costume. Yet very few of the costume designers tried to exactly replicate the smooth matte texture of a swan's feathers and opted instead for more abstract representations of feathers, involving beading, sequins, and tulle among other things. The texture of a swan can be seen in Figure 7 and compared to the texture on the swan costumes in Figure 8.



Figure 7. Swan texture.
This is a photo of a swan's
body. Photo courtesy of
www.wildanimalsonline.com



Figure 8. Costume Texture.
These are detail photos of
swan queen costumes.
Photos courtesy of
Royal Opera House
Collections Online.

Dancer movement

One major concern that many of the Vanguard designers of the early 1900s failed to recognize was that dancers need to move. Picasso's costumes for the ballet *Parade* are one of the most glaring examples of this. His costumes, however visionary, were heavy, cumbersome, and impossible to move in. To understand what a dancer needs to wear, it must be understood how they move. Typically a ballerina's core is kept strong and upright. Until corsets were taken out of tutus in the early 1900s ballerinas were confined to an upright position and classical ballet maintains this posture for the most part. A *cambre*, or bend at the waist, is the most a designer would have to consider. Most of the intense movements are done by the legs which need a full range of movement to perform in. If a costume is not designed well it could cause a dancer to trip and fall when they attempt to pirouette or leap. The arms are typically moved in smooth, fluid motions, in order to make the leg work appear as effortless as possible. The ballerina uses her arm movements and poses to communicate what she is trying to portray. Miming is central to telling the story in classical ballets because there is normally no dialogue.

Tutu construction

Although initially constructing a costume was a hopeful end goal, it was discovered that constructing a tutu is a major undertaking that did not fit within the scope of this project. A single tutu can use over fifteen yards of netting and is usually sixteen layers thick. Some tutus are built using more than twenty different types of fabrics and materials and take a minimum of one hundred twenty man hours, from various trained professionals, to

complete. The cost to build a basic, classic tutu, with the proper materials, begins at around \$1500. Because constructing an actual costume would be such a strain on time and money, the costume was designed but never built.

Design for a swan queen

After much research, it was decided that while the tutu may be overdone it is an iconic and romanticized symbol of classical ballet that is very difficult to replace. Even when vanguard artists like Mikhail Fokine, of the Ballet Russe, designed for Swan Lake, the designs stayed true to the iconic symbol. Based on this my designs strayed very little from the classical tutu, unlike what would have happened had I designed for a more contemporary ballet or a ballet written for the purpose of experimentation.

White was the color that had to be used for the swan queen, not only because of tradition but also because of symbolism. The swan queen represents innocence and virginity; she is the damsel in distress and the side of good in this plot of black and white good and evil.

The main innovation in this design was that the costume helped in the transformation of the swan queen. Instead of being dependent on mime, ballerina has an additional queue to help the audience identify the transformation. Through an easy, onstage adjustment to the costume, the silhouette changes from swan to princess. In its default position, the tutu holds the silhouette of the classic ballerina princess. By pulling the tutu back into a sort of bustle at the rear and letting the black under layers at the front fade into the

backdrop, the tutu's silhouette is made to resemble the body of a swan. Additionally a covering is pulled over the ballerina's hair and flowing, wing like pieces of tulle extend along her arms when she is a swan. When the swan is a princess, these cover the back of her leotard, but when she is a swan they let the black back of her leotard fade into the backdrop while they stand out against the darkness, curving along the dancer's body in the shape of an elegant swan's neck. Figures 9-12 show the costume from the front and side as the swan and as the princess.



Figure 9. Side of the dancer as the queen. This image shows what the costume looks like from the side when the dancer is in her human form.



Figure 10. Side of the dancer as the swan. This image shows what the costume looks like from the side when the dancer is in her swan form.



Figure 11. Back of the dancer as the queen. This image shows what the costume looks like from the back when the dancer is in her human form.



Figure 12. Back of the dancer as the swan. This image shows what the costume looks like from the back when the dancer is in her swan form.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

After studying ballet and the history of ballet costumes, the conclusion was reached that while more experimentation and creativity in the way of costumes is desirable, the tutu has maintained its status as the primary adornment for ballerinas because of its functionality and romanticized resemblance to the clothing worn during the period that most classical ballets were written and set in. The ballerina is a romanticized icon that cannot be replaced.

Even though ballets like *Swan Lake* were produced by the Ballet Russe, they stayed close to their classical roots and were not used as a ground for change. The majority of the productions that experienced jolts in creativity from vanguard artists were written explicitly by the Ballet Russes for experimentation and had no classical ties. These experimental ballets rarely became widely produced classics and the ones that did seemed to be absorbed into the mainstream eventually so that little of the original creativity in their design is left. They were meant as creative expressions and oftentimes carried messages about the time period they were written in. Today there are many new ballets and other types of dance emerging that take creative license in their costume. Even though the costumes for classical ballet may not have changed or need to change, there is still room to be found for experimentation and creativity in ballet costume design.

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